

BECKER PLEADS WITH WHITMAN

Not For Mercy But to Clear
Him of Allegations About
First Wife's Death.

OSHSING, N. Y., July 30.—Charles Becker, who died in the electric chair early Friday morning, made a final appeal to Gov. Whitman Thursday night. It was not a plea for mercy. Becker realized that he would die and he was awaiting the time with his jaws clamped and his eyes blood-shot. But it was an appeal to the governor to make a statement that would clear the doomed writer of any stigma that might fasten itself upon him by reason of the word the governor issued Wednesday night.

The statement followed: "You are credited in public press with three statements concerning me, each of them wholly untrue, and unwarranted."

"First, it is said that I offered to plead guilty to murder in the second degree."

"Standing on the brink of the grave I ask you solemnly to name the person to whom I offered to plead guilty of murder in the second degree or any crime whatever. It would be too shocking to suspect that the governor of this state could stoop to assail with unfounded charges a helpless man in the very shadow of death. I prefer to assume that you would have been misled. But I demand in the name of justice that you state how the misconception was caused. For the statement is wholly untrue. I never offered to plead guilty to murder in the second degree or to any other offense. I never authorized anyone to make such an offer in my behalf. Every one of my counsel assures me that he never made such an offer."

Never Offered Testimony.
"Second, it is stated that I offered to give testimony against several persons (whose names are undisclosed) of having shared with me in collecting money from law breakers, what is commonly known as grafting."

"It is wholly untrue that I ever offered to give such testimony against anyone. Mr. Mantion is the only one who asked you on my behalf to take counsel with some citizen of pre-eminent distinction, concerning the executive action justice required in my case. He assures me that he never made any such offer or said anything that could be taken as suggesting it. I ask you, sir, to disclaim publicly this imputation on me or else assign your authority for making it."

"Third, it is said that I sent counsel to two men arrested for complicity in the murder of Herman Rosenthal at the moment of their arrest."

"This is wholly untrue. I ask you to disclaim it."

"Fourth, with a crudity that is almost inconceivable it is stated that my first wife died under circumstances warranting suspicion that I had caused her death."

"Against this foul insinuation I content myself with this simple narrative of facts which can be verified by many persons, including her own father. I was married to Mary Mahoney of 117 Washington st., Feb. 6, 1895, by the Rev. J. H. McGahan of St. Peter's church, corner Barclay and Church sts. Mrs. Becker caught cold on the night of our marriage. It settled on her lungs and 10 days later she was treated by Dr. Turner of 30 State st., later by Dr. Cope of 111 W. 12th st., by Dr. Rockwell of the Roosevelt hospital or the Vanderbilt clinic, also by Dr. Loomis, the eminent tuberculosis specialist, and by a doctor in Jeffersonville, Sullivan county, whither she had been removed on account of her disease. Mrs. Becker died in her father's home Oct. 15, 1895, and was buried from St. Peter's church and lies in Calvary cemetery. No breath of suspicion was ever raised against me as to my wife's death, for every one knew that the cause was heavy consumption."

"Her father, Jeremiah Mahoney, now lives at Roseville, Newark, N. J. Asks to Be Cleared."

"Will you, sir, disclaim this hideous imputation while I remain alive or

How Becker Spent His Last Day

SING SING PRISON, N. Y., July 30.—After a restless night, Becker arose at sunrise Thursday morning and spent an hour reading the Bible. He asked that the morning papers be brought to him as soon as they reached the prison, and when the guard arrived with an armful, the condemned man went through them hastily.

He spent half an hour at his breakfast and soon after 8 o'clock the acting principal keeper, Frank Dornier, told him that he must prepare for the final step. Becker answered cheerfully that he was ready and walked unflinchingly to the bath room. His head was then clipped to receive the electrodes and he was allowed to return to his cell, where a new suit of black and dark gray shirt, together with underclothes, were waiting for him.

While Becker was absent guards stripped the cell of everything except the cot, bed clothing and two prayer books. A small framed picture of Mrs. Becker, which hung at one end of the cell, was taken down and mailed to Mrs. Becker in New York.

Must I go to my death with so foul an accusation on my character without an opportunity to meet and refute it?

"To this charge and to all others that may be formulated or insinuated I answer by repeating solemnly on the brink of the world to which you are sending me before my time what was my constant answer while in the world. I am as innocent as you of having murdered Herman Rosenthal or of having counseled, procured or aided his murder or of having any knowledge of that dreadful crime."

"Mark well, sir, these words of mine. When your power passes then the truth of Rosenthal's murder will be known. But not while your nominees remain district attorneys and can hold the club over these persons. With the aid of judges who were misled into misconceiving the testimony offered on my trial and into mistaking it both to the jury and on the appeal you have proved yourself able to destroy my life. But believe me, I will surrender it without rancor. Not all the judges in this state nor in this country nor the governor of this state nor the district attorney nor all of them combined can destroy permanently the character of an innocent man."

(Signed) "CHARLES BECKER."

Original Changed.
Becker's statement as originally prepared was scathing in its denunciation of Gov. Whitman. It was replete in adjectives such as arise only out of the bitter hate and was so severe that it shocked Fathers Curry and Cashion when they read it. They suggested that the statement be moderated.

"The world has a bad enough impression of you now, Charles. Don't make it worse," Father Cashion is reported to have counseled the condemned man.

Becker was obdurate. He raved about the alleged wrong Whitman had perpetrated against him and declared that no statement that he, Becker, could make at this time, would express the hatred which he feels for the governor.

Refusing to yield to persuasion the priests summoned Warden Osborne. The warden argued vainly with Becker, but he still refused to tone down the statement. The warden was in a quandary inasmuch as Mrs. Becker upon whose advice the prisoner has never refused to act, could not be reached at that hour.

"If your lawyers counsel you to moderate the statement will you accede to their request?" Becker was asked.

He finally agreed to hear what Cashion and Mantion would have to say on the subject. A telephone message was sent to them in New York and they hurried to Sing Sing. They were more than three hours in changing the prisoner's viewpoint and were compelled to resort, it is said, to every art of persuasion.

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y., July 30.—Gov. Whitman denied Thursday night that he had ever said that Becker offered to plead guilty to murder in the second degree. He is reported to have said: "I never said to anyone that Becker had offered to plead guilty to murder in the second degree. No one ever came to me with such an offer. I saw only three reporters in Albany last night and such a suggestion was not discussed. I saw them all at the same time."

"I would like to have a stenographer now; I have something important to give out," Becker said to Dornier when he had donned his new clothes. He was told that it was against the prison rules to allow him to have a stenographer, but that he could have pencil and paper.

Writes Statement.
From prison officials it was learned that Becker was angry at a statement given out in Albany in which it was stated that there were suspicious circumstances connected with the death of his first wife.

"You can inform the newspaper men that I will have a statement that will refute these charges in every particular and that it may prove interesting reading," Becker declared in angry tones when writing material was brought.

He got to work at once, but twice during the day it was announced that the statement would require revision. Whether Becker's counsel assisted him in preparing the statement while he was in the death house could not be learned.

Blankets were hung up about the cell and Becker screened himself from the view of fellow convicts. He delayed his task long enough to pray with Father Curry and with Father Cashion, but returned to it as soon as the two priests left the cell.

The passion was read continually during his spare moments by Becker. He also received spiritual easement by reading from the four gospels, the fifth Psalm, the Miserere and the acts of Contrition, Faith, Hope and Charity. These were recommended to the condemned man by his two spiritual advisers.

Lord's Talk Favorite.
The Lord's talk to the disciples at the last supper was Becker's favorite spiritual panacea, and is resorted to whenever he became highly nervous, but he divided his religious reading during the last few days and followed the various made by Father Cashion and Father Curry.

W. Bourke Cockran and Martin G. Mantion spent two hours with Becker during the afternoon. Soon after they entered the death house, Jackson and John Becker, brothers of the condemned man, and Mrs. Katherine Gelliger, his sister, reached the prison. They were allowed to visit the death house.

When his counsel emerged from the death house they said they had nothing to give out and knew nothing of any statement.

"Becker is thoroughly composed," said Deputy Warden Charles Johnson during the afternoon. "He is resigned to his fate, is meeting it without fear and will continue to show the same disposition, I believe, until his death."

Dr. Charles W. Farr and Dr. Henry Morene, the prison physicians, examined Becker during the afternoon. They said he showed a slight trace of nervousness at times, but otherwise the prisoner was entirely normal. His pulse stood at 78.

"He shook hands with us and remarked smilingly, 'I suppose you have come to bid me goodbye,'" said Dr. Farr in describing his visit. "I wonder, doctor, whether I could have some flowers sent to me. I am just beginning to realize how dreary my last hours really are," Becker said to Dr. Farr.

The physician communicated the prisoner's wish to Warden Osborne, but the warden would not state whether the flowers would be sent in. It was against the rules, he said, but it was intimated among the guards that Becker received a big bunch of beautiful red and white roses soon after his wish became known.

While all the interest centered about Becker, very little attention was given to Sam Haynes, who will pay the penalty for murdering Mrs. John Harrison in Paterson, Putnam county, N. Y.

It was originally intended that Haynes should go to the chair first, but Becker pleaded with Warden Osborne to be allowed to go first in order that the ordeal might be over with as soon as possible. Haynes, who has been a shuttle cock of fate in the latest developments connected with his fellow prisoners, readily consented to the change.

The negro had spent a year in the death house without having a visitor, aside from John Lowery, the lay preacher of New York, who will lead him to the chair. He has no relatives as far as can be learned by prison officials, and his sole source of worry during the last two weeks was

BECKER DIES IN ELECTRIC CHAIR

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE.)

by wires. The hands clasped in the agony of death and the crucifix fell to the floor. But through it all Becker made no sound. The only noise came from the sharp breathing of the spectators and the murmurs of fright and pity which could not be repressed, and the creaking of the leather straps as the body shuddered and rolled in their grasp.

The body sagged forward and the doctors gave the signal to turn off the electricity. It was decided to give Becker another shock for he was a strong man and hard to kill. Two more shocks were given in quick succession before Dr. C. W. Farr, the prison physician, allowed the body, now a lifeless corpse, to be removed from the chair.

The removal of the body was a ghastly ceremony. It lay limp in the chair and slid into a grotesque attitude as the straps were unhooked. When the helmet was taken off there was a hissing sound like that made by a person expecting his breath. Becker's face was a bluish white in the early morning light. The eyes were closed but the mouth hung open.

The corpse was quickly carried into an adjoining room where the autopsy was performed. When the clothing was removed the physicians tenderly removed a photo of Mrs. Becker, which the condemned man had worn pinned to his shirt over his heart, when he went to his death. The brain was removed, weighed and the stomach was removed and examined. Preparations were at once made to ship the body to Mrs. Becker in New York.

PLEA IS DENIED.

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y., July 30.—Gov. Whitman Thursday night denied Becker's last appeal. He stood firm as Mrs. Becker tearfully begged for mercy and the life of her husband. "I know my husband is no saint, but he is not a murderer," Mrs. Becker told the governor.

For half an hour the governor listened to the pleading of the brave loyal wife of the doomed man. The governor went from his own rooms to the quiet old parlor of the Nelson house. There in the dim light of early evening he found her huddled in a chair by the window. With the governor were his military secretary, Maj. J. Stanley Moore and John B. Johnston, one of Becker's counsel.

In the street, under the window and down the lobby of the hotel a curious crowd of 1,500 persons waited to hear the governor's decision and to catch a glimpse of Mrs. Becker. "Mrs. Becker, I am willing to listen to anything you have to say," the governor told her as he entered the room. "If there is anything new or anything you wish to tell me in confidence you may do so with perfect freedom and with the assurance that the confidence will be respected."

Asks for Life.

"No, there is nothing new; nothing that I can tell you except that I know my husband is not a murderer. Won't you save him and give us a chance? Time will prove that he is not guilty," Mrs. Becker pleaded.

Mrs. Becker spoke in a low tone. She was crying softly when the governor came into the room and though she made a brave effort to control herself, she broke many times in that half hour of pleading.

The governor walked up and down the little room with his hands behind his back, and his "fighting jaw" set, but when he spoke, which was not frequently, his voice was none too firm. Neither Maj. Moore nor Mr. Johnston spoke during the half hour. "I am sorry I cannot help you, but I must do my duty," was all that the

a persistent cold, which he feared would develop into pneumonia.

While Becker's body was claimed by Mrs. Becker, Haynes died friendless. The Mutual Welfare league composed of Sing Sing convicts, will take charge of Haynes' body after the electrocution and will bury it in the little cemetery on the bluff overlooking the bleak prison walls, but there will be no one to mourn his end.

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governor said after his first statement to Mrs. Becker.

The light of day had gone with the little woman's hope as the governor at last ended the interview with this final statement.

Salvation Army Band Plays.
"It is hard to tell you so, but I can do nothing. I am sorry for you and I am sorry for your husband, but I must do my duty."

The governor left the room abruptly, followed by his secretary and Mr. Johnston. They left the woman alone by the window and at that instant a Salvation Army band opened its services just across the street.

Apparently Mrs. Becker did not hear the band. She fell forward in her chair. There was a broken sob or two and then with remarkable self-mastery she straightened and sat crying softly until the time came to go to the train which was to take her to the man who was waiting in the death house at Sing Sing.

The governor leaned limply over a chair as he told the reporters the result of the interview.

"I suppose you want to ask me if I have seen Mrs. Becker?" was his greeting to the newspapermen. "Well, she is in the next room. I have told her that I cannot intervene."

Then turning to Mr. Johnston the governor said:

"Perhaps you had better make your statement."

Johnston's voice was so weak he could hardly make himself heard as he said:

"I asked the governor to grant a respite until we could have opportunity to review the decision of Justice Ford in an appellate court in view of

the fact of his determination that there is no inherent power in the supreme court to set aside a judgment in a capital case which is predicated on fraud and perjury."

"And that request I refused to grant on the ground that no appeal lies," announced the governor.

"I then asked the governor," Mr. Johnston continued, "to reconsider his determination not to refer the case to Former Chief Judges Andrews and Cullen of the court of appeals and the governor has stated that his original determination is final."

"Finally I asked the governor to grant a reprieve so that we may present to him the newly discovered evidence which he decided was insufficient, and such additional evidence we have obtained since the motion was asked."

"I feel there is no new evidence and I think it my duty to decline," said the governor.

Says Mrs. Becker Brave.

"Then there is nothing that can be done to save Becker?" Johnston was asked.

"I know of nothing,"

In telling of his interview with Mrs. Becker the governor said:

"She asked only that I commute the sentence to life imprisonment. She insisted that he is innocent and asked aid solely because of her belief in his innocence."

"She is a brave woman and kept a wonderful control of herself. Of course she cried. She is a woman. This is the hardest thing I ever had to do. I thought I had been up against some pretty tough things in the district attorney's office, but I never went against anything like this before."

The governor and Mr. Johnston

asked that the reporters refrain from seeking an interview with Mrs. Becker.

MRS. BECKER ARRIVES.
OSHSING, N. Y., July 30.—Mrs. Charles Becker arrived at the prison at 11:25 Thursday night. She was accompanied by John B. Johnston, one of her husband's lawyers. She was completely broken.

She began to cry when she entered the long corridor. But womanlike she stopped before a mirror and adjusted her hair and hat which had blown away on her long taxicab ride from Poughkeepsie.

Becker came into the principal keeper's office in the garments that he wore in the chair.

His head was bowed and his hands extended toward the woman.

She looked at his clothing and started back.

"My God, Charlie," she cried. "I can't look—I can't look."

"You have been a brave little woman," Becker replied. "Be brave now."

She ran to him and literally threw herself upon him. He clutched her to his breast and together they wept.

"What kept you, what kept you?" he asked.

"I don't know, but—oh, it was such a long time," she replied.

"What time is it?" she queried.

"They told her it was half past 11. Becker pushed her into a chair and began to talk rapidly.

There were two guards present and Mr. Johnston stood at the door.

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